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**Subject:** Response to Draft City of London Plan (Archdeacon of London)  
**Date:** 17 June 2024 11:30:31  
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To whom it may concern

Please find attached a response to the Regulation 19 Consultation: City of London Plan (2040) on behalf of the Archdeacon of London.

**Cordula Zeidler**  
FRSA IHBC  
Practice Director,  
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**Donald Insall Associates**  
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17 June 2024

## **Regulation 19 Consultation: City of London Plan (2040)**

We are responding to the Regulation 19 consultation on the Draft City Plan, on behalf of the Venerable Luke Miller KHC SCC, Archdeacon of London in the Diocese of London. Our comments are concerned with the City churches and the way in which their significance for and in the City is reflected in the draft policies of the plan. We have some concerns about a number of these policies and these concerns are set out in detail below, and we would like to encourage your authority to review and revise the relevant policies so that they are commensurate with your duty to protect these heritage assets for the enjoyment of all.

We believe that modifications to the plan are needed to make it legally compliant and sound.

### **1.0 Evidence Base**

We are impressed by the thorough and detailed research invested in Tall Buildings Evidence Base topic paper (ED-HTB1), particularly its analysis of the contribution that City churches have made from Saxon times through to the present. This baseline is vitally important in understanding the significance of the City churches, and we are concerned that this significance has not always been reflected in the Draft Plan. We have been engaged in a detailed study of the heritage significance of the EC BID area in recent months and much of our research has involved City churches. We feel it is important that their unique significance is reflected in policy, given that these churches have shaped the image and identity of the City over centuries, and because they remain vitally important landmarks, places of great religious importance and community value.

### **2.0 Significance of the City Churches**

The City churches as a group form a crucial element of the historic fabric of the City of London. They speak not only to the history of the Church of England, but also to the social, economic, political and civic forces that have made the City the place it is today. They are not only important local landmarks but also form an architectural group of national and international significance.

During the medieval period, the City was home to a range of Christian bodies that served the local community in different ways, from parish churches to monastic foundations. Churches worked symbiotically with civic and lay institutions to serve the needs of those who lived and worked in the City. They were also cornerstones of the urban environment and dominated the City as landmarks, identifiable as places of gathering and wayfinding. The close relationship between the churches, the community and the City was sustained after the Reformation and the foundation of the Church of England.

The wealth and national prominence of the City over centuries has engendered some of the most architecturally significant churches in the country, recognised by many being listed at the highest grade, Grade I. When they were constructed, these buildings were

at the forefront of contemporary design. From medieval churches to those rebuilt under Sir Christopher Wren following the Great Fire of London, to the neoclassical structures of the eighteenth century by Nicholas Hawksmoor and George Dance the Younger, the city churches are unique and of exceptional quality. Moreover, the City churches are some of the few historic structures surviving in the City and are therefore deeply important. The development of these churches and their changing fortunes over time is fundamentally tied to the development of the City itself. Their maintenance and protection must be an important consideration in further developing the City in our modern age.

### **3.0 Positive Heritage Protection Policies**

We welcome many aspects of Draft Plan and support these wholeheartedly, as they give proper regard to the significance of heritage assets.

- We welcome the recognition in Strategic Policy S14 of the role churchyards play in the social and environmental welfare of the City, and the suggestion of a partnership with churches in order to promote a greener City.
- Strategic Policy S11.3d encourages the sensitive retrofit of heritage assets that would benefit climate resilience and adaptation in line with the Church of England's work in "caring for God's creation". This is positive.
- We also welcome the commitments in Strategic Policy S11 to conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings, in line with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the policies of the NPPF.
- Churches are often significant features within conservation areas, so we welcome HE1.6 and its commitment to preserve, and where possible enhance the character, appearance and significance of conservation areas, again in line with the 1990 Act.
- We welcome the acknowledgement in Strategic Policy DE7 that places of worship are sensitive receptors in terms of daylight and sunlight availability.

Whilst these policies are all commendable, we have found wording elsewhere in the Draft Plan which does not seemingly accord with these policies.

### **4.0 Basis for Response & Comments**

Our contribution below is made in the context of Section 35 of the National Planning and Policy Framework which states that local plans and spatial development strategies must be examined to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal procedural requirements, and whether they are sound. If plans are 'sound', they are:

*(a) Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;*

*(b) Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;*

*(c) Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and*

*(d) Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.*

We accept that for the most part the Draft Plan appears to be sound and positive. However, there are some sections which in our view may not pass the above tests.

## **4.1 Lack of Reflection of Evidence Base Findings**

Overall, the policies expressed in the plan do not always accurately reflect the evidence gathered in the Tall Buildings Evidence Base, City Plan 2024, and thus these elements of the draft plan are in our view not justified. Specifically:

- The Draft Plan does not address the narrative underlying the Evidence Base of the contribution that churches have made to the City over many centuries. This should be added.
- The Draft Plan appears not to pay regard to section 11, paragraphs 16 to 22 of the Evidence Base which identifies Ecclesiastical and City Churchyards as a core heritage typology. Section 11.16 identifies elements of setting which may contribute to their significance as:
  - The relationship with associated open space.
  - The landmark quality in views.
  - The contribution to symbolic or processional routes.
  - The still-appreciable presence in longer-range views.
  - The high status presence within the streetscape where the deference of surrounding structures is appreciable.
  - The group value with other places of worship.

These key elements of setting are not given sufficient weight in the Draft Plan.

- The Draft Plan does not acknowledge the vulnerability to the impact of tall buildings of the setting of historic churches as identified in section 11.22 of the evidence based through:
  - Encroachment on the landmark or open-sky qualities associated with towers or spires.
  - The potential diminishing of group value where the historic density of sacred spaces in the City remains appreciable
  - The intrusion into the intimate character or enclosed views from within sacred spaces.

These vulnerabilities should be made explicit in the Draft Plan.

- The Draft Plan does not address the risk identified in section 12.18 of the Evidence Base that the skyline is at risk of being transformed in such a way that the remaining medieval contributors to the skyline such as church spires could be overwhelmed. Again, this should be clearly reflected.

- The Draft Plan also does not address the risk identified in section 13.7 of the Evidence Base of a disruption of the relationship between St Paul's Cathedral and the City churches. This is an important consideration and should be called out.
- In its assessment of the Smithfield character area, the Evidence Base makes specific references to the Church of St Bartholomew the Great and references its Norman fabric. In the Draft Plan, SP24: Smithfield makes specific reference to other Smithfield institutions such as the hospital, museum and market, but omits any reference to St Bartholomew the Great. This should be rectified.
- Similarly there is no reference to the significance of the Temple Church or to the character of the Temples in TP1: The Temple.

We are particularly concerned that the Heritage Impact Assessment for St Paul's Cathedral describes it as the "mother church of the Diocese of London" and discusses its broader setting and its relationship with the River Thames. However, it makes no mention of the significance of the physical relationship between the Cathedral and its daughter churches. Neither is this key relationship acknowledged in the Draft Plan. The group value of the City Churches and their relationship with the Cathedral should be brought out much more clearly in policy HE1 of the Draft Plan.

#### **4.2 Lack of Consistency with the NPPF**

Section 201 of the NPPF states that:

*Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

Section 205 states that:

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

The following sections of the Draft Plan raise concerns that they may not be consistent with these national policies:

- Strategic Policy S12.4 states that "The height and form of tall buildings must take account of strategic and local views". To be consistent with national policy this draft policy should replace "take account of" with phrasing that is consistent with the duty to not only take into account but also to give 'great weight' to the asset's conservation.
- Strategic Policy S12.5 states that "The suitability of sites for tall buildings... should take into consideration local heritage assets and other localized factors relating to townscape character. The phrasing "take into consideration" should be similarly adjusted to be stronger, in line with the NPPF.

- Strategic Policy S12.8 states a range of factors which tall buildings must “have regard to”. These include the skyline, the character and amenity of their surroundings, and the significance of heritage assets and their immediate and wider setting. We are supportive of the acknowledgement of both the immediate and wider setting of heritage assets, but as with the above, the phrasing “have regard to” should be adjusted to reflect the requirement for ‘great weight’, as above.
- Strategic Policy S11.4 states that the City Corporation will have regard to views of the City that have been designated by other Local Planning Authorities. As properly designated views, the City Corporation should seek to protect them, particularly where interference with such views could have a harmful impact on the significance of the City’s heritage assets. We would encourage more definitive wording.
- The proposed new Fleet Valley Cluster of tall buildings falls in the Wider Setting Consultation Area of the protected vista from Greenwich Park, with the potential to impact the setting of the west end of the Cathedral in this view. The erection of tall buildings in the setting of St Paul’s Cathedral is at risk of not being consistent with national policy, which demands that great weight is given to the conservation of heritage assets. A policy imperative for the avoidance of such harm should be made explicit.
- It is conceivable that the Fleet Valley Cluster may produce negative impacts on the setting of City churches in protected River Prospects, Townscape Views and other local views, particularly the highly-significant spire of St Bride’s Church (Grade I) and other historic churches around the proposed cluster. There appears to be little analysis of the impact of the cluster on these views, meaning it does not appear to be positively prepared and is at risk of not being consistent with national policy. We are aware of the current exercise to re-draft the LVMF guidance, however, we consider it important that the plan itself also calls out potential conflicts between new tall buildings and heritage with a view to minimise these conflicts.
- The Draft Plan devotes considerable effort to the protection of the Grade I-listed Bevis Marks Synagogue, particularly in Policies HE1.8 and S21.6. The Archdeaconry welcomes these policies and the specific recognition of historic places of worship in planning policy. However, the Draft Plan lacks the justification to explain the priority given to calling out this heritage asset above other Grade I-listed places of worship, including many City churches. In doing so it is not justified by proportionate supporting evidence, and it is at risk of not being consistent with national policy because the Draft Plan appears to give greater weight to the significance of one asset over many others. We would urge you to equally name the City churches, and other places of worship which have heritage significance.
- The protection of setting offered to the Bevis Marks Synagogue under Policy HE1.8 specifically defines its immediate setting. Appendix 2 of the NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as “the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve”. By focussing on the “immediate setting” of a heritage asset the Draft Plan is not consistent with national policy. If such a narrow test were applied to the setting of a City church it would fail to take into account section

11.16 of the evidence base which acknowledges the contribution to the significance of churches made by their landmark quality in view towards towers and spires and the significance of their presence in longer range and river views. In this way therefore the Draft Plan is also not justified.

#### **4.3 Positive Plan Preparation**

Sections 11.1.4 and 11.1.5 of the Draft Plan acknowledge the commercial, tourist and economic contribution made by the City's heritage assets, but makes no acknowledgement of the much broader contribution made to the City by its historic churches. They provide a significant community, educational and cultural resource, contributing to the diversity of what the City has to offer to its residents, workers and visitors. This covers community, educational and wellbeing activities in addition to worship. Given their great importance as community buildings as well as heritage assets and tourist attractions, we feel that the contribution of what happens inside of and spreading out from the City churches must be explicitly acknowledged. In this regard we consider that the Draft Plan is not positively prepared.

#### **4.4 Effective Plan Making**

The City of London Local Plan (January 2015) under Policy DM12.5: Historic Parks and Gardens, under the subheading "How we will make it happen" specifies partnership working with the Diocesan Advisory Committee in relation to City churches. The current draft removes this, and makes no reference to cooperation or partnership with the DAC. This is regrettable, and has the potential to be an impediment to it being effective. We would encourage your authority to retain this element of the current plan in the new plan.

**In addition** to the above points, we would like to make the following comments:

- Section 11 is titled "Heritage & Tall Buildings". We feel that this is misleading and appears to imply a connection between the two, when much of the City's heritage is unrelated to issues around tall buildings. It also provides no reflection on the importance of archaeology and of views which are of key importance and which are also covered in the section.
- The Draft Plan makes no mention of the cumulative impact of development on the setting of heritage assets in spite of the Planning Practice Guidelines which states that "when assessing any application which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change" (paragraph 013). The vulnerabilities of the City churches highlighted in the section 11.22 of the Evidence Base and quoted above are exacerbated by the lack of acknowledgement of the cumulative impact of development.
- Section 3: Health, Inclusion & Safety covers working with a range of partners to create a healthy and inclusive City. It specifically mentions health and educational facilities, libraries, childcare facilities and sports and recreation facilities. Given the work done by the City's churches in this area, a specific goal of supporting them in their community contributions would be appropriate and helpful.

**To summarise**, we feel that the Draft Plan should more explicitly outline the heritage significance of the City churches, their value as a group, and their religious, community

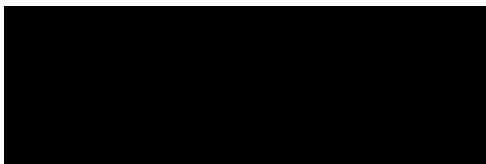
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and tourist value, and that all policies in the plan should be sufficiently robust to ensure that they align with the heritage policies in the NPPF and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, so as to ensure that these heritage assets are appropriately protected and so that the plan is legally compliant and sound.

We are seeking a modification to the plan, and would like to reserve the right to participate in examination hearing session(s), either on behalf of the Archdeacon, or for the Archdeacon to appear themselves.

Please keep us informed of the next stages of the plan making process.

Yours sincerely,



**Cordula Zeidler** MA MSc IHBC FRSA

Practice Director  
For and on behalf of Donald Insall Associates